

Business MATCHMAKING



in partnership with



Release Date: May 19, 2003

Release Number: 03-32

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Event Schedule for Billion-Dollar Business Matchmaking Program Set by SBA, U.S. Chamber of Commerce and HP

Regional Business Matchmaking events -- set for Chicago, Birmingham and Washington, D.C. -- give small businesses unprecedented procurement opportunities from government agencies and corporations.

WASHINGTON - MAY 19, 2003 - Following the successful March 2003 launch of the groundbreaking Business Matchmaking program designed to provide a major economic stimulus to America's small businesses, the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), U.S. Chamber of Commerce and HP today announced the next three locations and dates for the program's national roll-out in 2003.

Business Matchmaking events are scheduled for the Midwest Region in Chicago on June 17-18; the Southeast Region in Birmingham, Ala., on July 31, in conjunction with the National Black Chamber of Commerce annual meeting; and the East Region in Washington, D.C., on Sept. 19, which coincides with the SBA's National Entrepreneurial Conference and Expo. Dates and locations for additional Business Matchmaking events in 2003 will be announced in the near future.

The initiative, originated by the SBA and now a partnership involving the SBA, U.S. Chamber of Commerce and HP, matches small businesses with federal, state and local government agencies and large corporations that have actual contract opportunities for products and services. The program is expected to provide up to \$1 billion in procurement contract opportunities to small businesses during the events being held in 2003.

"The Business Matchmaking program is the largest national initiative in American small business history to bring small businesses and public and private organizations together at the same table for the specific purpose of awarding procurement contracts," said SBA Administrator Hector Barreto, a former small businessman and well-known champion of small business. "This is a real program with a real mission -- to give small businesses around the U.S. a chance to generate revenue by doing business with government agencies and large corporations."

The next regional event — set for June 17-18 in Chicago at McCormick Place — will provide small businesses throughout the entire Midwest the opportunity to participate. **To register for the Business Matchmaking program in Chicago, small businesses can go to www.businessmatchmaking.com.**

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Chicago's Mayor welcomed the selection of his city for the Business Matchmaking event in June.

"Chicago has long been known as a city that encourages entrepreneurial spirit," said Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley. "We recognize the tremendous importance of small businesses to the economy of Chicago, the Midwest region and the U.S., and support the spirit of the Business Matchmaking program and the powerful opportunity it brings to small businesses. On behalf of small businesses throughout the Midwest, we look forward to hosting the second event of the nationwide tour."

The federal government annually spends more than \$200 billion for products and services, and the government's statutory goal is to have at least 23 percent of that total -- or approximately \$46 billion -- go to small businesses. As a result, with procurement officials from government agencies and large corporations taking part in each event, the Business Matchmaking program offers small businesses throughout the country the opportunity to participate in ways never before possible.

In addition, because small businesses comprise 99 percent of all U.S. businesses, employ nearly 56 million people, and account for more than two-thirds of all new jobs, the matchmaking program's success can provide an important stimulus to the U.S. economy.

According to SBA Administrator Barreto, excitement surrounding the program has been building since a pilot event held last October in Cleveland and an official kick-off event March 4-5 in Orlando. At the two-day Orlando event, almost 80 representatives from government agencies and private enterprise companies met with over 600 representatives of more than 450 small businesses for a total of nearly 2,500 interviews. Thirty-six percent of the firms participating were women-owned, and 42 percent were minority-owned businesses.

A good example of the Business Matchmaking program's success involves a commercial general contractor who attended the October pilot event and had appointments with seven government agencies seeking building contractors. Joe Lopez, founder and president of New Era Builders, was delighted when one of those meetings resulted in a major contract from the United States Navy — awarded within a few weeks after his appointment — to build a security fence around a local Marine Corps station.

"It is almost unheard of in our industry to meet a contact and close a deal so quickly," Lopez said. "But this event enabled New Era to win a contract and begin what I believe will be a long-standing relationship. Without the Business Matchmaking program, it would have been extremely difficult and time-consuming for us to gain the mind share of an entity like the U.S. Navy. The return on our investment was phenomenal."

As positive as results have been for small business participants to date, they're equally impressive to other involved participants.

Frank Gramo, a procurement official who is director of supplier business alliances for Cendant Car Rental Group, the parent company of Avis Rent-A-Car and Budget Rent-A-Car, attended the Orlando event to work with small businesses to determine how they can provide products and services to his company. Cendant's needs range from alarm systems and auto hauling services to industrial supplies and promotional items. He plans to build on the success at that event through participation in future events.

"On a scale of one to 10, the Business Matchmaking event was an 11," Gramo said. "There were more legitimate matches and opportunities than at any other event I've attended. Out of 25 appointments, we're following up on 23 potential opportunities to do new business with small business."

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Key to the program's success is the opportunity for small business representatives to meet with buying representatives from government agencies and large corporations through pre-scheduled, individual appointments. The meetings are scheduled before each event by having suppliers (small businesses) and buyers (government agencies and corporations) complete online profiles. Based on the profiles, the best possible matches are created. In many cases, it is likely for a single small business to have numerous appointments during the course of the event.

For participating small businesses, the cost is approximately \$125 for a single attendee and \$60 for each additional participant from the same small business.

A limited number of scholarships are available on a first-come, first-served basis to 7 (j) eligible small businesses. Potential eligibility is based on being an 8(a) certified firm, a small disadvantaged business, a business operating in an area of high unemployment or low income, or a firm owned by a low-income individual. For information, individuals can contact the U.S. Chamber, toll free, at 800-638-6582. A scholarship includes a waiver of the registration fee for one company representative. It also includes admission to a seminar held the day before the event that provides insight on how to maximize appointments with procurement officials.

In addition to the pre-set appointments, the Business Matchmaking event provides small businesses valuable insight on local financing options, how to apply for the Government Services Administration (GSA) schedule and access to technology resources and educational seminars on a variety of relevant topics, such as contracting with the federal government, access to capital, international trade, and trends in technology and marketing.

About the SBA

The U.S. Small Business Administration, established in 1953, provides financial, technical and management assistance to help Americans start, run, and grow their businesses. With a portfolio of direct and guaranteed business loans and disaster loans worth more than \$45 billion, SBA is the nation's largest single financial backer of small businesses. Last year, SBA offered management and technical assistance to more than 1.5 million small business owners. SBA also plays a major role in the government's disaster relief efforts by making low-interest recovery loans to both homeowners and businesses.

America's 24 million small businesses employ more than 50 percent of the private workforce, generate more than half the nation's gross domestic product, and are the principal source of new jobs in the U.S. economy.

About the U.S. Chamber of Commerce

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is the world's largest business federation, representing nearly three million companies, 2,800 state and local chambers, 830 business associations and 94 American Chambers of Commerce abroad. Founded in 1912, the U.S. Chamber is headquartered across from Lafayette Square and the White House in Washington, D.C.

About HP

HP (NYSE: HPQ) is a leading global provider of products, technologies, solutions and services to consumers and businesses. The company's offerings span IT infrastructure, personal computing and access devices, global services and imaging and printing. HP completed its acquisition of Compaq Computer Corporation on May 3, 2002. More information about HP is available at <http://www.hp.com>.